

**Transportation and Infrastructure
Working Group Meeting Summary
September 28, 2006**

Overview

Rich Bradley, Executive Director of the Downtown BID, gave an overview of the Center City Action Agenda. The DC Office of Planning and the Downtown BID have partnered to create a process as a follow-up to the successful 2000 Downtown Action Agenda. The downtown area is becoming built-out, with only about 5 million square feet of development potential out of a projected 25-30 million square feet over the next five years. One visible trend is development is shifting to areas adjacent to the traditional downtown area, which is to be expected as the core area is built out. Therefore, there is a need to look at a broader area – the Center City. This broader area encompasses the higher-density zoning and mixed-use development types that are found in the downtown area – stretching from Dupont Circle to the SE-SW Waterfront and from Foggy Bottom to Capital Hill.

The Action Agenda will establish a new set of 5-year goals with a list of strategic actions that can be initiated over the next 18 months in order to achieve those goals. Another significant change from the 2000 Action Agenda will be the consideration of qualitative factors, such as sense of place and other quality of life indicators that are more than square feet or dollar value. The planning process will be relatively quick, with a final report issued in February, 2007. A steering committee provides oversight and will sort out priorities between the eight different working groups. The working group process will be an intensive two-meeting process. This first meeting will be for issue identification. The second meeting will be to identify 8-10 strategic actions, with 2-3 high priority actions, to achieve the 5-year goals. The actions can be broadly defined to include future planning studies as well as “bricks and mortar” improvement projects.

Issue Discussion

Water and Sewer Infrastructure

The issue discussion started with the dire circumstances facing the water and sewer infrastructure throughout the District. WASA was formed in 1997. Prior to that, there was little effort in terms of system-wide replacement of the conveyance system that was designed for a 50-year useful life, but has lasted over 100 years. Consequently, the pipes are crumbling. There is adequate treatment capacity to accommodate future growth, but the conveyance pipes need to be replaced.

WASA faces a financial crisis in finding adequate funding for the necessary improvement projects. The agency is currently completing a District-wide assessment and project priorities are based on urgency. In addition, the improvements to reduce Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) is expected to cost \$2 billion over the next 20 years.

WASA is not in a position to support new development. The agency has limited funding to provide system upgrades in coordination with DDOT street repairs. The rate structure is at its limit and there is no mechanism to collect impact fees. Consequently, developers are required to install improvements as part of their frontage improvements. This process shifts the costs to developers and results in a piecemeal system of improvements.

The discussion focused on the need to assess the magnitude of the problem, both in terms of total funding as well as an annual need. Also, there was a brief discussion about alternative measures to reduce demand on the systems, such as increasing the tree canopy, however Jodye Russell, WASA, did not think these measures would significantly reduce the need for major improvements.

Utilities

The private utilities are in a somewhat better position than WASA. Most utilities include system upgrades and replacement within their rate structure, although this system is reaching its limit. The trend is towards more user fees, but there is a need for more joint financing to spread the costs more broadly than the consumers.

Washington Gas and Pepco have adequate supplies, but need to install supply lines in the Anacostia Waterfront area. Verizon has no critical supply issues and only requires conduit connections to new buildings.

A significant issue is the coordination of improvement projects. All of the utilities require conduit space under the streets. The goal is to coordinate system improvements with street projects so that newly paved streets do not have to be torn up for utility improvements. DDOT is responsible for a 5-year capital improvement program (CIP), with a 2-year schedule for major road repaving and reconstruction projects. DDOT sometimes needs to shift priorities, but the utilities cannot shift as quickly, which results in missed opportunities.

The infrastructure funding issue could benefit from a campaign similar to the Metro Matters program that clarified the scope of the problem and focused the effort for solutions.

WMATA

WMATA has been focused on controlling costs and increasing revenues, primarily by increasing ridership in off-peak hours. Recent improvements have been

successful at increasing the capacity of the Metrorail system, which is not expected to reach capacity until 2011 or 2012. If Metrorail was able to run 8-car trains at all times, then the system has enough capacity to the mid-2020s.

WMATA is looking at improvements to the bus service to relieve congestion. Bus rapid transit, trolleys, and light rail on the major transit corridors – Georgia Avenue, K Street, H Street, Anacostia Waterfront – are key to this strategy. Also, pedestrian tunnels between the Farragut stations and Metro Center/Gallery Place can provide relief to some of the choke points in the system.

One concern is the suburban jurisdictions are adopting different strategies and technologies to address their own needs without a larger consideration of the regional needs. Using different technologies creates problems with integration and connections; and can be more expensive because of the need for redundancy in equipment.

DDOT

The local street system is reaching capacity. There is no room to expand capacity, so the solutions need to look at changing behavior to spread out the peak period and use the resource more efficiently. The big issue is too many vehicles in the Center City. Solutions require a multi-pronged approach. Increase mix of uses and provide housing. Increase rail capacity. Enhance circulation in-town. Even efforts to improve the quality of DC schools will make it more attractive to live in the District, which will make transit more feasible.

New York Avenue is a major choke point in the system and will be an increasing problem as new housing is built in Prince Georges County. There is a concern that only 30% of the new housing in the region is conveniently accessible to Metrorail. Another choke point is circulation around Mt. Vernon Square.

The Center City congestion issues can be divided into two groups. The first deals with accessibility – a quick and efficient system to get in and out of the Center City. The other half deals with mobility or circulation – how do you move around the Center City. For example, up to 30% of the local traffic can be looking for parking. Options could be performance parking meters or other pricing strategies that achieve 85% occupancy to make curbside parking more readily available. A critical component to both groups will be shifting peak periods to a more 24-hour circulation system. This shift could be achieved through congestion pricing strategies; and parking and transit systems that enable people to “park once” and move about the Center City without their vehicle.

One of the keys to solving the circulation issues will be the next level of transit improvements between Metrorail and Metrobus. The Circulator has been a success and needs to expand service to other times and areas. The K Street Transit Corridor project is typical of the difficulty that is required to reach consensus in order to move the project development forward.

Another aspect of the congestion issue is goods delivery. A double-parked delivery truck can quickly create a traffic jam. Curbside management, technology, and enforcement need to be part of the strategy to reduce congestion.

The summary conclusion was that the transportation system can function through the next 5 years of development, but there is a need to start addressing the long term needs before service levels begin to seriously degrade.

Discussion of Possible Strategies & Actions

The meeting discussion identified three broad themes:

1. Access – Getting In
 - a. Metrorail capacity – additional cars and stable funding
 - b. New York Avenue
2. Mobility – Getting Around
 - a. K Street Transit Corridor (circulation around Mt. Vernon Square)
 - b. Circulator expansion
 - c. Parking, goods delivery, and other system improvements
3. Infrastructure – Underground
 - a. Assessment of existing conditions and future needs
 - b. Long-term plans with financing
 - c. Water/Sewer are have the most critical needs.

The discussion identified additional actions:

- A clear case needs to be made, similar to the Metro Matters campaign. This campaign will require comprehensive assessments of conditions and needs.
- In terms of funding, need to identify how much is needed and how it will be collected – who pays.
- Creating an understanding that inadequate infrastructure increases the cost of development, which makes it difficult to pay for other amenities.
- Failure to address the infrastructure needs could result in a defacto moratorium.
- Make core improvements relevant to all jurisdictions in order to spread transit/infrastructure costs throughout the region.
- The funding strategy should to address how revenues are generated.
- Re-conceive the idea of streets – more than just for vehicles, needs for pedestrians, transit, and the environment.
- Look closer at how to manage demand for transportation system capacity – congestion pricing and peak hour shifts.
- The parking supply should be adequate, with increased efficiency through pricing and shared access.

- The Convention Center site represents an opportunity to provide some of Metrorail's subsurface security improvements and system upgrades.
- The Metrorail pedestrian tunnels are critical projects.
- Demand management strategies could include:
 - Increasing the mix of uses, with more housing in the Center City;
 - Improving the quality of the school system to make the District more attractive to families, thereby reducing the lengths of trips; and
 - Workforce development that trains District residents to fulfill the Center City employment needs.